

# Drinking fluids and how they affect your bladder

## Contact us

**Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)** – To make comments or raise concerns about the Trust's services, please contact PALS. Ask a member of staff to direct you to the PALS office or:

**t:** 020 7188 8801 at St Thomas' **t:** 020 7188 8803 at Guy's **e:** [pals@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@gstt.nhs.uk)

**Knowledge & Information Centre (KIC)** – For more information about health conditions, support groups and local services, or to search the internet and send emails, please visit the KIC on the Ground Floor, North Wing, St Thomas' Hospital.

**t:** 020 7188 3416

**Language support services** – If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch using the following contact details.

**t:** 020 7188 8815 **fax:** 020 7188 5953

**NHS Direct** – Offers health information and advice from specially trained nurses over the phone 24 hours a day.

**t:** 0845 4647 **w:** [www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk)

**NHS Choices** – Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

**w:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

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## Bladder problems

### Cystitis

Cystitis is an inflammation or swelling of your bladder lining and can be caused by irritation, damage or an infection. Symptoms include a sharp pain when passing urine; blood in your urine; back and stomach aches; the need to pass urine suddenly (called urgency) or more often than usual (referred to as frequency).

### Bladder infections

A bladder infection is a type of urinary tract infection (UTI) and is most commonly caused by bacteria from outside of the body travelling up the urethra and into your bladder. One of the main symptoms of a bladder infection is cystitis. Other symptoms include dark, cloudy and smelly urine; a burning feeling or pain when passing urine; and not being able to empty your bladder completely.

Drinking the recommended daily amount of fluid will help prevent bladder irritation and ease the symptoms of cystitis or bladder infections.

### Incontinence

Some people experience urinary incontinence (the inability to control when they urinate). There are a number of different types and two of the most common are:

- **Urge incontinence** – where you have a sudden need to pass urine and leak before you are able to reach a toilet. This is often referred to as an overactive bladder.

## Appointments at King's

We have teamed up with King's College Hospital in a partnership known as King's Health Partners Academic Health Sciences Centre. We are working together to give our patients the best possible care, so you might find we invite you for appointments at King's. To make sure everyone you meet always has the most up-to-date information about your health, we may share information about you between the hospitals.

### Contact details

For more information, please contact:

- **Carlene Igbedioh**, Continence Nurse Specialist for Elderly Care, on **020 7188 2083** Monday to Wednesday and Friday, or **020 7188 2093** on Tuesdays
- **Elaine Hazell**, Continence Nurse Specialist for Urology, on **020 7188 6783** Monday to Friday
- **Ellie Stewart**, Urogynaecology Nurse Specialist for Women's Services, on **020 7188 3671** Mondays and Tuesdays only. If you leave a message on her answer machine, she will contact you on her return.

## Fluids and your bowel

The type of fluids that you drink can also affect your bowel movements:

- Acid-based drinks, such as orange, pineapple, cranberry and lemon juice are best avoided if you have stomach problems, such as irritable bowel syndrome.
- Coffee has a laxative effect, so if you have loose stool or diarrhoea, you may want to reduce or stop drinking coffee. However, if you are constipated, it may help to restore regular bowel movements.
- Herbal teas can help with different bowel problems: ginger and peppermint teas may relieve wind and liquorice may relieve constipation. However, fruit teas such as rosehip, orange and rhubarb teas may cause loose stools.

## Useful sources of information

**Incontact** – Provides support and advice for people with bowel and bladder problems and has a network of local groups.

**t:** 0870 770 3246 **e:** info@incontact.org

**The Bladder and Bowel Foundation** – Offers advice and assistance over the phone from specially trained nurses.

**t:** 0845 345 0165 (Monday to Friday, 9.30am – 1pm)  
**e:** info@bladderandbowelfoundation.org  
**w:** www.bladderandbowelfoundation.org

- **Stress** incontinence. This is where you leak small amounts of urine when you cough, laugh or exercise.

If you experience incontinence, you may not feel comfortable increasing the amount you drink, in case it makes your symptoms worse and you leak more. However, some people find that if they avoid certain types of fluids (see below) their symptoms improve and they suffer less with frequency, urgency and stress incontinence. Bladder training or pelvic floor exercises can also help with incontinence – please ask a member of staff for more information on these self-help methods.

### Nocturia

Nocturia is where you wake up in the night and need to pass urine. Getting up to go to the toilet once a night is considered normal. However, this generally increases with age. It is normal to get up twice a night in your seventies and up to four times a night in your nineties!

If you have a lot of trouble with nocturia, reduce the amount you drink before you go to bed. For example, have your last drink at 8pm instead of 10pm. However, you should make sure that you are still drinking the recommended daily amount of fluid.

## Drinks that can affect your bladder

### Caffeine

Caffeine is found in tea, coffee, hot chocolate, cola and other fizzy drinks. It can make any symptoms of urgency or frequency worse because it relaxes the muscles in your pelvis and urethra. It can also reduce how long and

how deeply you sleep, so you are more likely to wake up and need to go to the toilet at night.

Cutting down on the amount of caffeine you drink could improve your symptoms. However, if you decide to do this, reduce the amount you drink gradually, to avoid withdrawal symptoms such as headaches, drowsiness and irritability.

### **Fruit juices**

Fruit juices such as grapefruit and orange are acidic, so can irritate your bladder. They are best avoided if you have regular UTIs or an overactive bladder.

Grapefruit juice can interfere with the way your body responds to some medicines. If you drink grapefruit juice regularly and take medicines you should confirm with your doctor or pharmacist that this is OK.

It is thought that cranberry juice can help to prevent cystitis by stopping certain bacteria (such as e-coli) from growing and multiplying in your bladder. This is due to a substance in the berries called 'tannins'. Some people also think that it may help if you have developed a UTI, although there is no firm evidence to support this. If you have a catheter or regularly experience UTIs, drinking cranberry juice may help to prevent further infections. Try drinking one glass (about 200mls) of cranberry juice twice a day. It may take up to five weeks for you to feel a difference.

**Do not drink cranberry juice if you have arthritis, heartburn, irritable bowel syndrome or hiatus hernia, as this could make your symptoms worse.**

Cranberry juice can also interfere with the way warfarin works and make your blood thinner than it should be, so please do not drink it if you take warfarin tablets. If you have diabetes, discuss this with your doctor or dietitian before drinking, as it is high in sugar.

### **Herbal teas**

Different herbal teas have different properties. Some (such as elderflower, rose, wild blackberry and nettle) have a diuretic effect. This means they increase your urge to go to the toilet, so you feel the need to go more often. If you have frequency or urgency, these herbal teas may make your symptoms worse.

However, chamomile tea is thought to have antiseptic and anti-inflammatory properties, so it may help you if you have cystitis. It can also help to prevent and relieve flatulence (wind). If you have indigestion, lemon and ginger tea might help you.

### **Alcohol**

Alcohol can increase the acidity of your urine and irritate the lining of your bladder. You may find it helpful to reduce the amount of alcohol you drink if you have regular UTIs or experience urge incontinence.

### **Fizzy drinks**

Fizzy drinks are high in sugar, which can encourage bacteria to grow. Therefore, if you have regular urinary tract infections, try to reduce the amount of fizzy drinks you drink. You may also find it helps to reduce the amount of overall sugar in your diet. Look on the labels of food you eat, as many products contain added sugar.